



# EXPLORING THE INTERFACE BETWEEN TEACHING OF ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE AND EMPLOYABILITY

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## ABSTRACT

Mostly, in all the streams of higher education, English is taught as a compulsory subject. So, it becomes very much necessary to know the reason behind it. Many students are found to be unemployable even after completing their higher education or many are working in a very low salary. This paper is an attempt to understand the reality in English classrooms. Many professors fail to understand the demands in real job market or what actually the employers are looking for and they forget that their primary job is to make students employable. Today, English language plays a vital role in getting a good job so the ever growing need for good communication skills in English has created a huge demand for teaching and learning quality English around the world. This study is primarily aimed at exploring the interface between the teaching of English as a second language and employability skills in the context of India.

**KEY WORDS:** ELT, Employability, ESP, Teaching Methodologies, Soft Skills

## INTRODUCTION:

ESP does not only mean English for Specific Purpose. It has two other meanings: (i) Education for Specific Purpose and (ii) Existence for Specific Purpose. Today's English teachers must be aware of these, especially those who want to step in the academics forever. English has often been misunderstood and taken as either a subject to pass or a language which a child must sometimes has to learn. The three stakeholders, playing a very important role, in academics are teachers, students and policy makers. They need to understand three basic questions: what, why, & how. Parents always think that their child must learn English but they never think about remaining two questions. Teachers, not only, need to improve their teaching methods but also need to illuminate students' minds dropping an idea in it as why and what do they want to learn. Today, the needs are different and it is different for every individual so, the English teacher has a peculiar role to play and that too at different levels.

The teaching of English has always been problematic because students may fail to see its relevance to their immediate and future needs except for examination purposes. And because many students continue to sail through different levels of their educational career without proficiency in English, the tendency is to pay little attention to the subject. Generally, English is viewed as a subject imposed on the school curriculum for reasons undefined to them; after all, all the other subjects necessary for their future careers are taught in other language in which they are proficient. (Ngvi Focho, Gladys: 2) The English language skills shall have to ensure the students that they were sufficiently fluent in English to function in the workplace or in any professional context. The objective of this paper is to discuss what English skills are required from the perspectives of all stakeholders.

## Employability Skills:

**"To be employed is to be at risk, to be employable is to be secure."**

**- The Art of building Windmills, Peter Hawkins**

Employability skills can be defined as a range of abilities or competencies that one may develop during his or her life through education, research, work experience, interests, and extra-curricular activities. They are also known as life skills, generic skills, core skills, or soft skills. The Higher Education Academy defines employability as "a set of achievements, skills, understandings, personal attributes that makes graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations." Employability Skills or soft skills include communication skills and other generic, attitudinal and transferable, self management skills and personal attributes such as self-confidence, self-control, inter and intra personal skills, honesty, integrity, reliability, adaptability, flexibility, willingness to learn, stress tolerance, managing time, efficiency, Interpersonal skills, and many other skills like team building, leadership, management, problem solving skills, initiative and enterprise etc. There are eight employability skills in the framework developed by Australian industry (ACCI/BCA, 2002), and adopted by the Australian VET sector.

Employability skills are the focus of this study and they are:

1. Communication skills that contribute to productive and harmonious relations between employees and customers.
2. Team work skills that contribute to productive working relationships and outcomes.

3. Problem-solving skills that contribute to productive outcomes.
4. Initiative and enterprise skills that contribute to innovative outcomes.
5. Planning and organising skills that contribute to long-term and short-term strategic planning.
6. Self-management skills that contribute to employee satisfaction and growth.
7. Learning skills that contribute to ongoing improvement and expansion in employee and company operations and outcomes.
8. Technology skills that contribute to effective execution of tasks.

Employability skills are taking on increased importance because jobs of today require flexibility and that flexibility "requires a strong grounding in generic, transferable skills and the ongoing development of these skills to maintain employability.

## Education, Employability and Employment: The Vital Bridge

There is a co-relation among education, employability and employment. The basic purpose of all institutions of higher education is to make students employable. Employability is not just an issue for business studies, it is an increasingly important part of the graduate portfolio- irrespective of area of study or focus of degree. Employability Competencies should not be viewed as being separate to discipline-focused skills and knowledge. It should instead be viewed as a complementary part of student education; adding to discipline-specific knowledge in such a way that enhances student learning whilst encouraging individual development and growth.

At present, there is a dire need in India to change the structure of the higher education system and a need for expansion of the educational scale along with vocationalisation of education to create a more robust system which corresponds with the need of the market. Based on this hypothesis, the researcher analyses the relationships between each of the two aspects education and employment respectively. Higher education and employment are indisputably connected. Changes in the education sector, in policy, funding and structure, directly impact the employment sector. The first challenge is that English faculty need to recognize the wider responsibility, not just of a language teacher; teacher of grammar and structure but of a trainer or a facilitator who can build real competencies to bridge the gap between corporate needs and institutional offerings.

## Unemployability: Bridging the gap through English

Today, the unemployability is increasing day by day and the root cause behind this, is the lack of proper communication in English. As per the data provided through a research, the fluency in English plays a major role in finding job placements in renowned organizations. The ability to speak and write in English is considered very much important by the recruiters. Companies want people who can basically read and understand written words in the form of instructions, reports, letters, memos, notices, and other any form of official documents. The mastery over English will help a person to conduct his duties efficiently.

In most of the surveys conducted among the employers, communication skill in English has been identified as one of the prime setbacks in India to find jobs. The

most of the candidates finds it difficult to speak or write in English with fluency and accuracy.

Mostly in all the fields of Higher education, English is taught as a compulsory subject in the first two semesters, so the students do not give more emphasis on this subject. They make such a mindset that they do not have to study English till their completion of the study, so they value only their technical subject and neglect the importance of English language. English is taught by professors with M.phil or Ph.d qualifications in higher education. Most of these professors have completed their Master's degree in English literature. ESP or CLT are not familiar terms among many English professors in India as most of them were not trained in ELT methodology; so the primary problem is an unawareness of the objective to teach English among English faculties. They need to understand that English is a skilled subject. After a keen observation and some data collected from the students and employers, it was found that needs keep changing. It becomes very much necessary to fulfil students' needs of 21st century office. The students, primarily, need to be aware of the rules of written genres such as, formal letters, emails, press releases and taking minutes of meetings. The first role of English teachers is to make clear an objective of learning English to the students so their way of learning will definitely improve and be strong if they know why they should learn what they learn.

#### CONCLUSION:

To conclude, we can say that as learning is a continues process so English should be taught as a primary subject till the completion of study instead of teaching it just as a compulsory subject in one or two semesters. It is also observed through this study that experiential learning can provide a strong basis for the demonstration and development of most of the employability skills, so English teachers need to focus on Outcome Based Learning and Activity Based learning. In this way, students can make much progress in learning English that are required to make them employable. It is very noteworthy to mention a very good initiative taken by KCG (Knowledge Consortium of Gujarat) to fill this gap and make the students employable by giving them the training of spoken English by skilled trainers in ELT.

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